

Message Text

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PAGE 01 TUNIS 00435 201501Z
ACTION SIL-01

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PARIS FOR LABATT

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ELAB, TS, PFOR
SUBJ: ACHOUR IN BRUSSELS AND FURTHER FALLOUT

REF: (A) TUNIS 0378 (NOTAL), (B) BRUSSELS 00903

1. ACHOUR'S VISIT TO BRUSSELS JAN 12 AND 13 WAS FOR THE
PURPOSE OF DISCUSSING WITH ICFTU THE JOINT COMMUNIQUE
ISSUED BY THE UGTT AND THE LIBYAN LABOR FEDERATION,
PROCEEDINGS OF THE UGTT NATIONAL COUNCIL CONFERENCE
HELD RECENTLY IN TUNIS, AND HIS RESIGNATION FROM PSD
OFFICES.

2. THE UGTT/LIBYAN COMMUNIQUE TOUCHED OFF A FUROR HERE
AND ELSEWHERE BECAUSE IT SEEMED TO JOIN THE UGTT TO THE
REJECTIONIST FRONT (ALTHOUGH THE TEXT IN ARABIC WHICH WE RECEIVED
EMPLOYED MUCH MORE AMBIGUOUS LANGUAGE). THE NATIONAL COUNCIL
PROCEEDINGS AND ACHOUR'S PARTY OFFICE RESGINATION, BEING INTERNAL
MATTERS BASICALLY, WERE OF APPARENT LESSER INTEREST TO ICFTU
EXCEPT INsofar AS THEY SIGNALLED A MARKED CHANGE IN UGTT/GOT
RELATIONSHIPS.

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3. THE UGTT ISSUED NO COMMUNIQUE ON ACHOUR'S MEETINGS
OR INTERVIEWS IN BRUSSELS BUT TAP (TUNISIAN GOVERNMENT-
CONTROLLED NEWS AGENCY) REPORTED THAT ACHOUR ASSURED
ICFTU THAT UGTT GRIEVANCES WERE SOLELY ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
AND WELL WITHIN THE PURVIEW OF NORMAL TRADE UNION
ACTIVITY. FURTHERMORE HE EMPHASIZED HE STILL REMAINED A

MEMBER OF THE PSD AND THAT HE STILL ADHERES TO ITS GOVERNING PRINCIPLES. HE DENIED THAT UGTT WAS ENGAGED IN A POWER STRUGGLE WITH GOT AND HE DENIED FURTHER THAT UGTT HAD EITHER IN FACT OR IN EFFECT JOINED THE REJECTIONIST FRONT, SAYING THAT THE UGTT STANCE WAS PERFECTLY CONSISTENT WITH GOT FOREIGN POLICY AS REGARDS THE MIDDLE EAST.

4. TAP FOLLOWED ITS ACCOUNT IMMEDIATELY WITH A SCATHING COMMENTARY WHICH DWELT UPON THE INCONSISTENCIES OF ACHOUR'S WORDS AND DEEDS PAST AND PRESENT. OUR UNDERSTANDING IS THAT OTTO KERSTEN/ICFTU WILL VISIT TUNIS JAN 23-24, DURING WHICH PERIOD HE MAY CONVENE A PRESS CONFERENCE TO EXPLAIN THE ICFTU POSITION ON THESE AND OTHER ISSUES.

5. EVEN DISCOUNTING PARTY HACKS AND OTHER CARRIERS OF OFFICIAL FAVOR, AN IMPRESSIVE NUMBER OF PROVINCIAL WORKERS AND EVEN SOME UGTT DELEGATES HAVE HAD PRINTED VARIOUS PROTESTS AGAINST UGTT/LIBYAN JOINT COMMUNIQUE, AGAINST VARIOUS RESOLUTIONS OF NATIONAL COUNCIL SESSION, AND AGAINST ACHOUR PARTY RESIGNATIONS. THESE LETTERS AND COMMUNIQUE HAVE APPEARED IN THE NATIONAL PRESS UNDER THEIR AUTHORS' SIGNATURES. AN ESPECIALLY INTERESTING TWIST IS A JOINT PROCLAMATION SIGNED BY SEVERAL TUNISIAN WORKERS IN LIBYA PROTESTING RECENT UGTT ACTIONS. ONE MAY NOT YET INFER AN EROSION OF UGTT LEADERSHIP SUPPORT FROM THE BASE, BUT WE WILL CONTINUE TO REPORT THESE INDICATIONS AND TENDENCIES.

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